

Community meeting summary March 1, 2005

About 50 community members attended Parks Open House on March 1 to review and comment on the Pro Parks Loyal Heights Playfield Improvement project. Parks staff available at the meeting to answer questions included Royal Alley-Barnes (Parks North Operations Manager), Dennis Cook (Senior Recreation Program Coordinator), Mike Mirante (Athletic Field Coordinator), Cathy Tuttle (Project Planner), and Karen Galt and Ted Holden (Parks Landscape Architects).

Two additional community meetings will be held on Tuesday, April 26 and Tuesday, June 14, 2005 from 6:30 – 8 p.m. at Loyal Heights Community Center, 2101 NW 77th Street. The Pro Parks Levy provides \$2,315,658 in project costs for planning, design, and construction. The exact Levy description of the project is: “upgrade and improve play surfaces and field amenities.” The field will be upgraded with synthetic surface in 2006.

The 1997 Joint Athletic Facilities Development Program (JAFDP) identified priority athletic facility projects that would increase the amount of capacity and improve the quality of play on City fields for youth and adults. The 2002 update of the JAFDP looked at ways to increase the scheduling capacity of the City’s athletic fields and examine the field system as a whole in order to make improvements for both field users and neighbors throughout the city. Loyal Heights Playfield was one of the priority projects identified for improvements with the JAFDP. This project will rebuilt two existing ballfields and the football/soccer field for year-round, all-weather use and improved quality of play. The field will require a minimal annual field maintenance. The project will include input from the local neighborhood and the Citywide recreation community.

The following are a summary of the comments and questions received at the Open House, comments received by phone, email, and mail, and from more than 20 responses received from a survey available at Loyal Heights Community Center and distributed at the Open House. Parks staff has worked hard to provide answers to community questions and incorporate community ideas into the project.

Process on synthetic fields

- **Have all decisions been made? What effect does community input have?**

Seattle Parks will hold three community meetings: on March 1, April 26, and June 14, 2005 to answer community questions and take comments that can be incorporated into the final improvement plan for Loyal Heights Playfield Improvements. Parks will also convene a Project Advisory Team (PAT) composed of Parks staff, neighborhood representatives, and community athletic field representatives to discuss the hours of field operation and the community use of the field. Parks also receives and records letters, email, and phone calls on this project. The community will have a final opportunity for input at the conclusion of the public involvement process during a public hearing on the project at the Board of Park Commissioners. Parks staff tries to answer all community questions. Comments and suggestions are carefully evaluated and many are incorporated into the final design if scope and budget allow.

- **When did Parks decide to upgrade Loyal Heights Playfield with Synthetic?**

The decision to upgrade Loyal Heights Playfield was initially made in the Joint Athletic Facilities Development Program (JAFDP), a report that had extensive public review throughout Seattle and that was approved by City Council in 1999 and again in 2002. The Pro Parks Levy, approved by voters in 2000, also requires Parks to “upgrade and improve play surfaces and field amenities” at Loyal Heights.

- **Which fields in Seattle have been upgraded? Which are left? Which are synthetic?**

Ten Parks and Seattle Public Schools playfields have been upgraded with synthetic surfaces. An additional five fields, including Loyal Heights Playfield, have funding for upgrades in the next two years. Fields were chosen throughout Seattle to meet the growing needs of athletic field users.

Current conditions/operations

Field condition

- **The field needs short term fence repairs.**

Parks agrees that the existing fence is in poor shape. It will be replaced as part of this project. Unfortunately Parks maintenance budget does not allow replacement before that time.

- **There is a problem with filling holes in field prior to use. Fields are not well-maintained now.**

The Parks staff who maintain Loyal Heights Playfield work hard to keep all fields in good condition. Grass fields require constant attention. Athletic field users as well as Parks staff are looking forward to the improved synthetic surface at Loyal Heights.

- **Regular maintenance of infield soil in “runs” could alleviate problem of mixing materials.**

This maintenance regime was tried without success in other Parks fields including Lower Woodland.

- **How can Parks address the problem of foul balls that often fall on 22nd?**

Parks landscape staff will position the fencing and orient the fields to make this less of a problem.

Operations

- **There is a lack of Ballard parks. The Community Center is closed Sunday.**

Parks Property Acquisition staff has purchased several properties as part of the Pro Parks Levy. See <http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/proparks/acquisition.htm>. Parks closes Community Centers as a way of providing good services while operating with finite resources.

- **Proximity of softball and baseball during joint use is problem.**

Baseball and softball should not be scheduled on this field at the same time. Parks staff will try to schedule field users to make sure these incompatible uses do not conflict with each other.

- **Who polices park now? Coaches have batting practice against a fence that says “No batting practice.”**

Parks staff will continue to provide written guidelines to field users and work more diligently with them to correct inappropriate behavior.

Dogs

- **Dogs use field too much. Dog owners think this is an off-leash park. This is a sports field where our children play. I support artificial field but control the dogs!**

Dogs, even on a leash, are not permitted on beaches, in children's play areas, or on organized athletic fields (Seattle Municipal Code 18.12.080). Parks encourages the public to use nearby off-leash areas in Golden Gardens and Woodland Parks. See all of Parks off-leash areas at <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkspaces/yodogs.htm>. Parks staff put signs up forbidding the use of the field by dogs but only Animal Control officers can ticket pet owners. If you see off-leash animals at Loyal Heights Playfield, please call Animal Control at 386-PETS (7387). Animal Control officers encourage the public to record the car license plates of people using the athletic field with their off-leash dogs in case an officer cannot respond quickly.

- **Will Parks add an off-leash dog area here?**

Because there are two nearby off-leash areas, and because of the proximity to an athletic field and children's play area, an off-leash area will not be considered at this site.

Parking

- **Enforce traffic and parking now and later. Cars park in private driveways.**

Parking is not permitted within 5' of private driveways. Property owners can choose to paint their driveways out to 5' with traffic yellow paint to discourage this illegal parking. If a car is illegally parked, please call Parking Enforcement at 625-5011. Let the enforcement unit know if a car is illegally blocking a driveway to encourage officers to make this a higher priority for response.

Environmental

- **Synthetic turf does not support wildlife and insects.**

This is correct; however, synthetic turf offers other environmental benefits such as storm water detention, no water required for irrigation, no fertilizer required, no air pollution from lawn mowers, no gas for lawn mowers, and the use of recycled tires in the infill.

- **Why replace natural grass with plastic and rubber that needs to be replaced every 15 years?**

Synthetic provides a better and more usable playing surface. Even though it is costly to install, Seattle Parks and many other municipalities have done studies that show the 15 year cost of maintaining natural turf is the same or higher than replacing the synthetic carpet. Please be aware that the base aggregate and even the infill from the initial installation can be reused. Only the carpet needs to be replaced after 15 years. Natural turf also needs periodic replacement.

- **What is the recycled content synthetic turf? How much petroleum, electricity and water are used in its manufacture?**

The infill for the synthetic surface is between 50% - 60% recycled tires. We are researching with the manufacturer if there are any other recycled materials used in the manufacture of the polyethylene carpet fibers. Parks is researching with the manufacturer the use of water, petroleum and electricity.

Fencing

- **Portable fences are needed when baseball and softball games played at the same time.**

Baseball and softball should not be scheduled on this field at the same time. Two Little League games with a 200' outfield can be scheduled simultaneously. Parks does not provide outfield fencing for Little League. Historically Little League has provided its own outfield fencing, maintains it, and is responsible for putting it up and taking down. Parks does not recommend outfield fencing at this site. Outfield fencing is not included in this project.

- **Foul ball netting is needed for baseball at the 3rd base.**

Several comments have been made concerning the need for higher fencing or netting on the 3rd base side of the baseball field along 22nd. The current fence is 9' high and is scheduled for replacement in this project. A higher netting extension is a good idea in this instance. Maintenance of the netting may be an issue. Staff will evaluate this option.

- **Install higher fence on south/west.**

See previous fencing questions. Initially staff wanted to put a 4' fence on the south side to minimize the "prison yard" feel that currently exists and minimize the visual impact. After hearing public comment at the first Community Open House, a decision was made to replace the south fence with one that is close to the existing height.

- **What will keep cars driving onto the field on 22nd?**

There are removable bollards at the main walkway entrance on 22nd. The bollards should be put back when they are removed. Between the baseball backstop and periphery fence along 22nd, additional bollards will be added to restrict vehicle access onto the field.

- **Can the outer 4' of chain link fence be aesthetically different?**

It would be best to keep all fencing the same material for visual consistency and to minimize replacement and repair costs. Galvanized chain link fencing is Park's Standard for ballfield fencing. If the community wishes to pursue other options (as at the University Playground), Parks would support this community project and recommend work through the Neighborhood Matching Fund Program.

Additional design scope and program

- **Does synthetic turf increase run-off? How is water detained?**

The synthetic turf system with its base aggregates and specially designed subsurface drainage system actually provides superior on-site storm water detention than what exists on the site now. Currently the turf grass field slopes at 1.5% and drains first into catch basins and then into the storm system in the street. During a 100-year, 24-hour storm, which is the storm we design to per the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Ch 22.800, 3.840 inches of rain fall per hour. 70% of the 100-year design storm will run off the surface into the storm system. This runoff equates to 2.67 cubic feet per second (CFS).

With the synthetic fields, first the sub-base needs to become saturated. Then the water will infiltrate through the infilled synthetic turf system, the base aggregates, and finally the subsurface drainage system on into the street storm sewer. This infiltration detains the water on-site and slowly meters it into the street system at a rate of 0.2 CFS. The synthetic turf system detains on-site 92.5% of the storm water produced by a 100-years storm. The 0.2 CFS discharge rate is the design optimum per SMC.

- **Will spectator stands have back and side railings?**

As part of this project, 15' long, 3-tier bleachers with wood seats will be added. Parks has used these bleachers on most all the recently redeveloped fields with great success. Aluminum bleachers have tended to "walk away" at other sites. The existing aluminum 5-tier bleachers at the site will remain. If more 5-tier bleachers were purchased, they would have back and side railings.

- **Will signs be added for pedestrian safety and circulation?**

On-site circulation and pedestrian safety will not change from what exists now. Staff is open to learning about any specific areas or needs that should be addressed.

- **Can signs describing synthetic turf be added?**

Generally Parks tries to avoid "sign clutter". However some sort of small signage perhaps in the dugouts to explain what the surface is and that lists problematic uses on the turf such as tobacco, sunflower seeds, spitting, food, etc. is a good idea.

- **Will batting cages be added?**

Not as part of this project. At other sites, leagues/users have sponsored batting cages.

- **Can a paved area for concessions be added?**

A small paved area seems like a good idea with not too much cost. It could also be useful for maintenance vehicles. A good location would be at the 22nd St. entry. This element will be incorporated into the project as we move forward.

- **The east slope important for sledding. Will sledding continue? Can sleds run onto synthetic surface?**

Sledding, as long as there is snow, should pose no problem to the synthetic surface. It is designed to withstand heavy use with metal cleats, so sleds should be okay.

- **Please add electrical outlets to existing poles.**

Outlets and security lighting are excellent ideas and will be part of the future lighting project.

- **The site needs abundant well-placed trash receptacles.**

Yes. These will be added.

- **Can Parks plant trees on 22nd NW and maybe on 20th NW?**

There currently are street trees along 20th. They are small. There is room (5') to plant street trees in the planting strip between the sidewalk and curb along 22nd. There is a tree fund program available through the Department of Neighborhoods. This would be an excellent community project that Parks would support.

- **What is the status of a skatepark here?**

Parks Operations staff rejected the community application to the Neighborhood Matching Fund to add a skatepark at this location. New skate areas are being added to nearby Ballard Commons and Woodland Park.

New field questions

- **Can bleachers be moved on to turf field during football games?**

Bleachers can be moved onto the field. Wood runners need to be attached to the legs to spread the load. This is done at many park sites.

- **Can metal cleats be used on the field? Is any special clothing needed to play on synthetic surfaces?**

The surface is designed to withstand metal cleats. Players play in their ordinary recommended protective clothing. No additional protective clothing is required for any sport.

- **Will there be a portable pitching mound?**

Based on comments from the Community Open House, the soccer field has been moved north to avoid conflict with the pitcher's mound. The pitcher's mound will still have a synthetic surface and not soil. Soil contaminates the adjacent synthetic surface infill negating its permeability and resiliency, and as it builds up, introduces a safety hazard.

Lighting

- **When will new lights be put in?**

Parks will added electrical infrastructure for a new lighting system as part of this project. The new lights will be installed within two years after the completion of the field as funds become available.

- **Can Parks add security/safety lighting to existing poles?**

If funds allow, security/safety lighting will be added to existing poles. And these features will absolutely be part of the improved lighting system to be developed in the next phase.

- **What will new lighting system look like?**

We invite the community and field users to visit Lower Woodland Park Baseball Field (#1) and Miller Playfield to see what Parks new field lights look like.

Parking/traffic management

- **Will Parks do a traffic/parking analysis to see if parking is required?**

A traffic/parking analysis is currently underway. The study will evaluate current parking available and parking demand at peak use times, and make recommendations.

- **Can parking be added to the south end of the park?**

The south end of the site is steeply sloped. Parking is not recommended at this location.

- **Can Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) add pullouts on 20th NW and 22nd NW to ease traffic flow?**

SDOT traffic control staff can work with the community to develop the best methods to address traffic flow on these streets.

- **How will circulation change on site, in neighborhood? Are there safety issues for SDOT to look at?**

Circulation patterns are not expected to change. The same games that are currently played on grass fields will be played on the synthetic field. The field will be used more annually because practice and games can be scheduled during wet weather and during winter months from the third week in November until March 1. In reviewing the project, SDOT staff did not see any safety issues to address.

- **Is angle parking possible on 20th NW or NW 75th as it is on NW 77th?**

The roadway width does not permit this street use.

- **Can parking be added to the west side of 20th? Can we remove parking from the east side of 22nd?**

At least 60% of neighbors need to concur and petition SDOT to make allow parking on both sides of this street. SDOT recommends adding parking to the west side of 20th in order to calm traffic along this street. Parking adjacent to all Seattle parks was taken out in the 1970s but many communities have since opted to add this parking back.

- **Limited parking is already tight with summer sports. Look for more parking options!**

Parks will work with athletic field schedulers to discourage parking around this field. The traffic/parking analysis will provide additional recommendations to address parking needs.

- **Can a Residential Parking Zone (RPZ) be added?**

RPZ areas can be added in a neighborhood if 75% of the spaces in a 5-block contiguous area are in use six to eight hours a day. At least 25% of those vehicles need to be non-local vehicles. SDOT will work with the community if they wish to see if they qualify as an RPZ area.



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www.ci.seattle.wa.us/parks/proparks/projects/loyalheightsplayfield.htm